

This report is primarily about the AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE held in New Orleans, Louisiana. June 23 – June 28, 2011.

Jim Casey, a public library director from Oak Lawn Public Library, provides these notes. His eloquence cannot be matched and so I have included his notes in this report.

I am pleased to represent Kentucky.

Those of us who attended ALA Annual of 2006 in New Orleans, when the “Big Easy” was just beginning to recover from the devastation of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, could see the enormous progress achieved by the culturally rich and uniquely spirited Crescent City during the past five years. Hot and muggy conditions did not prevent conference goers from having a pleasant mixture of business and pleasure. Grand total registrations exceeded 20,000, but proved to be lower than most recent Annual Conferences. Attendance did prove to be significantly higher than that of the 2006 Annual Conference in New Orleans. The previous Annual Conference final attendance reports were 26,201 for Washington, D.C.(2010), 28,941 for Chicago (2009), 22,047 for Anaheim (2008), 28,499 for Washington (2007), and 16,784 New Orleans (2006). Future Mid-Winter Meetings (January) will be held in Dallas (2012), Seattle (2013) and Philadelphia (2014). Future Annual Conferences (June) will be held in Anaheim (2012), Washington (2013) and Las Vegas (2014).

ALAWO (ALA Washington Office) BRIEFING: Given the venue of New Orleans, it isn't surprising that the ALA Washington Office (<http://www.ala.org/washoff>) included in its program offering a panel discussion of disaster preparedness and recovery. Jane Berliss-Vincent of the Accessible Technology Division presented an overview of the Global Public Inclusive Infrastructure (GPII) (<http://www.gpii.net>) in which accessibility software will become available to users and to libraries via “cloud” computing. In a few months, this initiative should be available to broaden access to the internet for millions of visually and hearing impaired individuals. State Librarian of Louisiana, Rebecca Hamilton, reviewed the important role played by public libraries as communications hubs in the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita (2005) and also expressed gratification that public libraries have recently been declared to be “essential participants” when it comes to the directing of fiscal and other FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) resources. She was especially pleased to report that Louisiana State Library was the ONLY governmental body in Louisiana that survived in fully operational mode after the 2008 Hurricanes Gustav and Ike. She described how legislators and State Police officials would park in the State Library parking lot to access the unimpaired wireless transmissions. Librarian Dan Barkley of the University of New Mexico described how a tragic fire in April-May 2006 destroyed 60,000 volumes in his library with another 80,000 lost to water damage. The steps he encouraged us to take in preparing a disaster recovery plan seemed to be disarmingly simple, but relevant.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION SESSION: Mario Gonzalez, Chair of Budget Analysis and Review Committee (BARC), reported how ALA and its divisions have sustained service despite shortfalls in revenue due to lower than budgeted expenses. FY2011 ends on August 31, 2011. Mario explained how revenue shortfalls of \$891,000 would be addressed by budget cuts amounting to \$737,000. Reserves will be tapped up to \$375,000 in order to balance the budget. The FY2012 Budget is being planned in recognition of the budgetary trends of FY2011 and with the understanding of the need for economies. Endowment Trustee Chair Dan Bradbury reviewed the progress of the Endowment Fund as of May 31, 2011. He cautioned that it is merely a “snap shot”. He reported a total in the fund of \$33,472,000 (gain of \$1.8 million) as of May 31 with positive results from virtually every investment instrument employed. The Trustees have done a wonderful job of bringing the Endowment Fund back from a low point in 2008 of \$23,421,000. Dan affirmed the effective fiscal management of the ALA Administrative team. The Fund was well positioned to take advantage of the economic recovery in financial markets. President Roberta Stevens reported on her year as President and the 14 hour days she has devoted to the Association. She toured Libraries throughout the country and promoted both advocacy and fund raising initiatives. Roberta is pleased that authors have stepped forward to serve as advocates of libraries. Roberta warned that all Librarians and Library advocates need to be ready to answer the question and challenge “Since we have the Internet, why do we need Libraries?” The answers given should be articulate and affirmative for Library advocacy. President-Elect Molly Rafael described how she will proceed with advocacy and diversity as targets for presidential initiatives. She was pleased to visit Library Schools – including the three in North Carolina – and was congratulated for a successful TV appearance a few days before.

ALA Executive Director Keith Michael Fiels gave a brief review of his lengthy written report to Council and Executive Board. He noted that Members were encouraged to give generously to ALA funding initiatives <http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/dev/alafunding.cfm> Keith mentioned the June 1, 2011 Virtual Town Hall Meeting had drawn as many as 530 attendees from across the country and from around the World. Questions submitted by Connect and a polling feature helped to make this an interesting and successful virtual meeting. He indicated that the Virtual Town Hall Meetings will become a regular feature of ALA. He also promoted improvements in the ALA Web Site. He warned that ALA will be dealing with the trend towards privatization of public libraries and developing initiatives to discourage this move away from public governance of libraries.

ALA-APA COUNCIL: Keith Michael Fiels (ALA-APA Executive Director) announced that ALA-APA Executive Director Jenifer Grady is leaving her position for a new job in Nashville, Tennessee. Her service to ALA-APA was affirmed. She was the first and only ED of this organization (since 2003). Lorelle Swader is taking over the organization for the present time. Keith indicated that ALA-APA is “over the hump” in terms of fiscal viability, but noted that the last few years had involved some “white knuckle” moments. In fact, the \$39,963 net revenue for FY 2011 is expected to allow for the repayment of about \$10,000 towards the \$240,000 debt owed to ALA. The ED of ALA-APA became a part-time position during 2010. The budgetary ceiling of \$271,988 was passed.

COUNCIL I: Among the noteworthy events of this session was passage of the “Resolution on Out of School Time Library Programs” presented by ALSC Division Councilor Rhonda Puntney

and seconded by YALSA Division Councilor Nick Burton, and AASL Division Councilor Sylvia Norton. This valuable resolution called for support from national and local government bodies (as well as funding) for library programs designed to continue the learning opportunities available to youngsters beyond the school day. Brent Bonfield presented a report on his "Future Perfect Task Force". Much of the work of this task force was conducted virtually --- phone, internet. Among the recommendations were to promote virtual participation, merging of Council and the Executive Board and the merging of ALA with State Chapters. Brent made the good point that a very large proportion of the ALA Membership is not able to attend meetings in person due to the costs involved. A lively discussion was provoked by this report --- especially the suggestion to disband Council in favor of direct voting by all members of ALA in the business of the Association. Some astute comments referred to the reality that the vast majority of the 61,000 members of the Association have absolutely no interest in governance. Hence, the value of a representative body to discuss and vote upon such matters was affirmed.

COUNCIL II: Councilor Pam Klipisch began the session with thanks to Councilors for their efforts to build support for the recovery of libraries in Joplin, Missouri. Councilor John A. Moorman, Chair of the Policy Monitoring Committee (and Director of Oak Lawn Public Library 1986-88), secured Council approval for revision of several ALA policies. A report is being prepared for the next Annual Conference to recommend a complete revision of the Policy Manual. Councilor Tom Wilding, Chair of Constitution and Bylaws Committee, secured several action items regarding Council elections and voting during virtual membership meetings. Jim Rettig's report from Committee on Organization secured approval of the creation of a Games and Gaming Round Table in ALA and the launching of efforts by the Executive Board to provide for studies to assess the feasibility of virtual or remote participation on ALA committees or other deliberative bodies. Jim Rettig, Chair, Council Effectiveness Task Force, reported several possible suggestions for the enhancement of Council effectiveness and relevance. He noted that ALA Connect could be used to greater effect and that Council to become more focused on the discussion of strategic issues while avoiding the tangential or procedural matters that often take significant amounts of time. It was suggested that reports without action items, such as the Freedom to Read Foundation (FTRF), not remain on the Council agenda. There were significant objections to the removal of the FTRF from the agenda. The action items of this Council Effectiveness Task Force report were postponed to Council III. FTRF President Kenton Oliver (Freedom to Read Foundation, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, Illinois 60611 www.ftrf.org/joinftrf) Noted that the Foundation is striving to obtain a firm financial base to sustain future activities. FTRF is working to insure privacy and access rights that may be reduced via the pursuit of profit. Kent announced that the Supreme Court had delivered a 7-2 decision favorable to FTRF in *Brown v. Entertainment Merchants Association* earlier in the day. There was much gratification at this victory.

ALA Presidential Task Force on Equitable Access to Electronic Content, Linda Crowe and Michael Porter Co-Chairs, secured passage of a series of action items including referral of their recommendations to BARC and the Executive Board for implementation --- particularly the allocation of \$200,000 to sustain staff efforts to promote equitable access to electronic content. Although delegating authority to proceed did not sit well with many Councilors, the need for urgent action on this issue prevailed in discussion and in the vote. Michael Porter emphasized

that this issue is of such importance that it “needs a home and it needs resource allocation.”

Resolution on Revised Guidelines for ALA Intern Program established the voting rights for interns on ALA Committees. Previously, voting rights were at the discretion of Committee Chairs. The Interns have been important participants on ALA Committees for many years and this measure was passed with a unanimous vote.

COUNCIL III: The beginning of this final session included eleven memorial resolutions and two tributes. Among those remembered were Dr. Norman Horrocks and Councilor Peg Oettinger. ALA Treasurer Jim Neal reported \$27,300,659 in revenues versus \$29,789,574 in expenses. Further reductions in expenses amounting to \$737,000 left a remaining deficit of \$154,000 will be addressed by the use of up to \$375,000 to guarantee a balanced budget by the end of the FY 2011 on August 31. The total General Fund Annual Estimate of Income for FY 2012 was set at \$27,820,693. A total Budgetary Ceiling of \$62,912,676 was passed unanimously. A Fundraising Advisory Committee is being planned and the Endowment Fund payout to the Association of from 3% to 5% for supporting the ongoing operation of the Association and to insure a balanced budget. The Endowment Fund Payout formula (Policy 8.5.1) was passed by Council. Jim also noted that ALA is targeting more of its resources towards strengthening the technology infrastructure of the Association. Julius Jefferson, Chair of Intellectual Freedom Committee, presented an action item urging libraries with self-service holds practices to protect the privacy rights of patrons by concealing the names and other personal identity information from the public. It was noted that ALA Council should not “muck around” with the day-to-day operations of libraries by suggesting strictures that may be impossible or impracticable to implement. Nevertheless, this resolution passed by a near unanimous vote. Another resolution opposing Section 215 of the Patriot Act was passed unanimously. Legislation Committee Chair Charles Kratz secured Council passage of action items supporting the funding of the Government Printing Office, funding for such statistical products as Statistical Abstracts, increased funding for literacy training via School Libraries, funding appropriations for LSTA (Library Services and Technology Act) at \$232 million, and the inclusion of Libraries in the WIA (Workforce Investment Act) funding. These action items were passed unanimously. International Relations Committee Chair, Sha Li Zhang, reported on the work of the Committee during the past year and the five goal areas adopted by the Committee on June 27, 2011 -- Advocacy, Funding and Public Policy, Building the Profession, Transforming Libraries, Member Engagement and Organizational Excellence. Jim Rettig returned with the Council Effectiveness Task Force recommendations and in most cases, the cogent suggestions presented by the Task Force were supported and elicited relatively little argumentation. However, there was considerable confusion expressed by Councilors over the actual intention of some of the recommendations.

Also before Council were the following resolutions. “Resolution to Endorse the United Nations 16 May 2011 Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression” presented by Councilor Aaron Dobbs and Patrick Sweeney, and “Resolution to Adopt ALA Connect as the Official Communication Channel for Official Association Business” also presented by Aaron Dobbs and Jennifer Pickle.

My notes do not, of course, highlight all of the actions taken by Council during this Annual Conference. Copies of the final wording of all resolutions and action items from Council

Sessions will be posted and available on the ALA Web Site <http://www.ala.org> in a few weeks.

CONCLUSION: Although attendance was lower than that of many other conferences in the more heavily populated sites such as Chicago and Washington, it was markedly higher than the New Orleans Conference of 2006 and gave witness to the restored confidence in the City five years after the devastation of Katrina. The wise fiscal management of the Association was clearly in evidence and is much to the credit of Greg Calloway, Keith Fiels, Jim Neal and others among the Association team responsible for budgetary affairs.

Notes provided to Councilors by Jim Casey, Oak Lawn Public Library, Oak Lawn, IL